

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel Claims 28 and 36-41 without prejudice to or disclaimer of the recited subject matter.

Claims 1-28. (Cancelled).

29. (Previously Presented) An exposure apparatus, comprising:
a carrying member for carrying thereon a workpiece; and
a supporting mechanism for supporting said carrying member, said supporting mechanism having a first element for producing a resisting force to a shift in a supporting direction, and a second element for producing a force for increasing the shift in the supporting direction,
wherein said second element can produce a force for moving said carrying member downwardly.

30. (Previously Presented) An exposure apparatus, comprising:
a carrying member for carrying a workpiece thereon; and
a supporting mechanism for supporting said carrying member between a workpiece transfer position and a workpiece processing position, said supporting mechanism having a first element for producing a resisting force to a shift in a supporting direction, and a second element for producing a force to increase a shift in the supporting direction.

31. (Previously Presented) An exposure apparatus, comprising:

a carrying member for carrying a workpiece thereon; and

a supporting mechanism for supporting said carrying member between a workpiece transfer position and a workpiece processing position, said supporting mechanism having a spring element and a plurality of magnet elements,

wherein, adjacent to the workpiece processing position, the weight of said carrying member and a combined force of a force produced by said spring element and a force produced by said plurality of magnet elements are approximately equal to each other,

wherein a clearance between said plurality of magnet elements when said carrying member is present at the transfer position is smaller than the clearance when said carrying member is present at the workpiece processing position, and

wherein, adjacent to the workpiece processing position, an absolute value, of a changing rate of the force produced by said plurality of magnet elements with respect to a change in the clearance, is set to be smaller than an absolute value of a change rate of the force produced by said spring element with respect to a change in the clearance.

Claim 32. (Cancelled).

33. (Previously Presented) An exposure apparatus, comprising:

a carrying member for carrying a workpiece thereon; and

a supporting mechanism for supporting said carrying member from a workpiece transfer position to a workpiece processing position, said supporting mechanism having a spring element and a magnet element,

wherein an absolute value of a changing rate of the force of said magnet element with respect to a change in clearance of the magnet, adjacent to the workpiece processing position, is set to be smaller than an absolute value of a changing rate of the force of said spring element with respect to a change in the clearance of the magnet.

34. (Previously Presented) An exposure apparatus, comprising:

a carrying member for carrying a workpiece thereon; and

a supporting mechanism for supporting said carrying member from a workpiece transfer position to a workpiece processing position, said supporting mechanism having a spring element and a magnet element,

wherein an absolute value of a changing rate of the force of said magnet element with respect to a change in clearance of the magnet, adjacent to the workpiece processing position, is set to be larger than an absolute value of a changing rate of the force of said spring element with respect to a change in the clearance of the magnet.

35. (Previously Presented) An exposure apparatus, comprising:

a carrying member for carrying a workpiece thereon; and

a supporting mechanism for supporting said carrying member between a workpiece transfer position and a workpiece processing position,

wherein, adjacent to the workpiece processing position and the workpiece transfer position, the weight of said carrying member and a force produced by said supporting mechanism are approximately equal to each other, and

wherein, in said exposure apparatus, there is a position, other than the workpiece processing position and the workpiece transfer position, at which the weight of said carrying member and a force acting on said carrying member is not approximately equal to each other.

Claims 36-41. (Cancelled).

42. (Previously Presented) An exposure apparatus according to Claim 29, wherein said supporting mechanism includes a spring element and a magnet element.

43. (Previously Presented) An exposure apparatus according to Claim 42, wherein, adjacent to a workpiece processing position for processing the workpiece, a weight of said carrying member and a combined force of said first and second elements are substantially equal to each other.

44. (Previously Presented) A device manufacturing method, comprising the steps of:

preparing an exposure apparatus as recited in Claim 29;

applying a resist to a wafer;

exposing the wafer by use of the exposure apparatus; and
developing the exposed wafer.

45. (Previously Presented) An exposure apparatus according to Claim 30, wherein said second element for producing a force to increase the shift produces a force to move said carrying member downwardly.

46. (Previously Presented) An exposure apparatus according to Claim 30, wherein, adjacent to the workpiece processing position, the weight of said carrying member and a combined force of said first and second elements are approximately equal to each other.

47. (Previously Presented) An exposure apparatus according to Claim 30, wherein the force to be produced by said second element is larger at the transfer position than at the workpiece processing station.

48. (Previously Presented) An exposure apparatus according to Claim 30, wherein said first and second elements include a spring element and a magnet element.

49. (Previously Presented) A device manufacturing method, comprising the steps of:

preparing an exposure apparatus as recited in Claim 30;
applying a resist to a wafer;

exposing the wafer by use of the exposure apparatus; and
developing the exposed wafer.

50. (Previously Presented) A device manufacturing method, comprising the
steps of:

preparing an exposure apparatus as recited in Claim 31;
applying a resist to a wafer;
exposing the wafer by use of the exposure apparatus; and
developing the exposed wafer.

51. (Previously Presented) A device manufacturing method, comprising the
steps of:

preparing an exposure apparatus as recited in Claim 33;
applying a resist to a wafer;
exposing the wafer by use of the exposure apparatus; and
developing the exposed wafer.

52. (Previously Presented) A device manufacturing method, comprising the
steps of:

preparing an exposure apparatus as recited in Claim 34;
applying a resist to a wafer;

exposing the wafer by use of the exposure apparatus; and
developing the exposed wafer.

53. (Previously Presented) A device manufacturing method, comprising the steps of:

preparing an exposure apparatus as recited in Claim 35;
applying a resist to a wafer;
exposing the wafer by use of the exposure apparatus; and
developing the exposed wafer.

54. (Previously Presented) An exposure apparatus comprising:
a carrying member for carrying a workpiece thereon; and
a supporting mechanism for supporting said carrying member between a workpiece transfer position and a workpiece processing position, said supporting mechanism having a spring element and a plurality of magnet elements,

wherein, adjacent to the workpiece processing position, the weight of said carrying member and a combined force of a force produced by said spring element and a force produced by said plurality of magnet elements are approximately equal to each other, and

wherein, in said exposure apparatus, there is a position, other than the workpiece processing position and the workpiece transfer position, at which the weight of said carrying member and a combined force of a force produced by said spring element and a force produced by said plurality of magnet elements is not approximately equal to each other.

55. (Previously Presented) An exposure apparatus comprising:

a carrying member for carrying a workpiece thereon; and

a supporting mechanism for supporting said carrying member between a workpiece transfer position and a workpiece processing position;

wherein, adjacent to the workpiece processing position, a force produced by said supporting mechanism acts so as to prevent said carrying member from being shifted from the workpiece processing position; and

wherein, adjacent to the workpiece transfer position, the force produced by said supporting mechanism acts so as to prevent said carrying member from being shifted from the workpiece transfer position.

56. (Previously Presented) An exposure apparatus comprising:

a carrying member for carrying a workpiece thereon; and

a supporting mechanism for supporting said carrying member between a workpiece transfer position and a workpiece processing position, said supporting mechanism having a spring element and a plurality of magnet elements,

wherein, adjacent to the workpiece processing position, a force produced by said supporting mechanism acts so as to prevent said carrying member from being shifted from the workpiece processing position, and

wherein, adjacent to the workpiece transfer position, the force produced by said supporting mechanism acts so as to prevent said carrying member from being shifted from the workpiece transfer position.